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## Mobile training unit gives state firefighters chance to tackle hard-to-duplicate situations

Amanda Iacone August 14, 2008

| The Journal Gazette



Advertisement

Local firefighters got a chance Wednesday to try the state's newest public safety gadget: a fire simulator the size of a tractor-trailer rig.

Firefighters from around northeast Indiana will train on the mobile live-training truck this month. The Indiana Department of Homeland Security bought the truck and will send it throughout the state for training, local homeland security director Bernie Beier said.

Firefighters from New Haven-Adams Township, Huntertown, Washington Township, St. Joseph Township and Gas City spent Wednesday evening at the Public Safety Academy of Northeast Indiana for their first round of training on the new piece of equipment.

They practiced putting out bedroom and kitchen fires because those are among the most common types of fires local fire departments face. But the departments also practiced a basement fire, a blaze that is tough to duplicate for training, said Chris Walker, who helps coordinate training among fire departments in the region.

Basements in most homes don't have a way out and make it dangerous to practice during an intentional house burning. But the truck has multiple exits and instructors use a remote control to turn on and turn off the propane-flames, said Walker, who is also an instructor with the Fort Wayne Fire Department.

Trainers can test the abilities of firefighters by increasing the flames or making them jump to mimic real conditions, Beier said.

One group of firefighters crawled into a smoky bedroom scenario complete with a metal bed and movable walls. They pounded on the metal floor and the flames flashed. They hauled in their hoses to try to put out the remote-controlled flames.

Mark Haudenschild, with Washington Township, said the truck was more realistic than other live fire training he's gone through.

"It feels more real," said Andrew Seftick of Washington Township, because it combines heat, fire and smoke.

The department trains in flash chambers and burn towers as often as possible.

"We'd love to get something like this more often," said Ryan Breeden, also with Washington Township.

Walker said the truck will be in Albion this month and will make its rounds throughout the state for a month of training at a time.

Beier said this is the first time the truck has been used. A fire instructor from the city of Marion was there Wednesday preparing for Marion's turn with the new equipment.

Greene County, Indiana

## **Fireworks put in clothes dryer causes eastern Greene County fire and explosion**

Friday, August 15, 2008

By Nick Schneider, Assistant Editor

An 11-year-old eastern Greene County boy got more of a bang than he anticipated Thursday night when he placed a large aerial firework shell inside of a gas dryer and ignited it.

The force of the explosion in the basement that followed was enough to raise the floor of the house more than a couple of inches, shatter glass and overturn furniture.

Fortunately, the young boy was not seriously injured.

However, he was admitted to Monroe County Hospital in Bloomington for observation for breathing difficulties.



Eastern Volunteer Fire Department photo The remains of a gas clothes dryer that exploded Thursday night when an 11-year-old boy placed a firework shell inside and ignited it.

Firefighters were on the scene of a house, occupied by the Tracy Thomas family, for more than five hours looking over damage trying to determine what happened.

The blaze on County Road 760N -- about seven miles northwest of Solsberry -- was reported to the Eastern Fire Department at 7:07 p.m.

When firefighters arrived on the scene white smoke was showing, according to Eastern Fire Department Assistant Chief Ryan Sparks.

"Initially, we thought there was a gas leak," he said.

Once inside the structure and after the smoke had cleared, Sparks and his fellow firefighters were amazed at what they saw.

The dryer had been moved more than five feet from its original location and the metal cylinder inside the dryer was bent almost straight, Sparks said.

"The force of the explosion in the basement took the roof (under the kitchen floor) and raised it one to two inches," Sparks said. "It shattered glass that was upstairs in the kitchen and turned chairs over. It was a very big explosion."

Initially, the boy, who is not being identified, told firefighters that he was using the dryer and it exploded. But when clothes were not found in the dryer his story changed early Friday morning when fire officials visited him at the hospital.

The boy told investigators that he was home alone and found the firework shell in his bedroom and just thought it was just a big firecracker.

Sparks pointed out that this is exact same size firework shell that is used by the Eastern Fire Department during its annual Independence Day celebration fireworks displays.

"He took it (the firework) to the dryer and used a barbecue skewer to light the shell. The boy was three to four feet away when it exploded," Sparks said. "He is very fortunate to be alive."

The firefighter continued, "He created a huge bomb. It was unbelievable to look at the damage that was done."

An Indiana State Fire Marshal's office field inspector was called to the scene early Friday to help determine the cause of the blaze and the origin of the explosions, Sparks said.

Six or eight other unexploded firework shells were confiscated from the boy's bedroom, Sparks pointed out.

Fire crews from Eastern, Center Township and Highland Township remained on the scene until 12:30 a.m. Friday



## Fire department receives FEMA grant

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AUGUST 17, 2008

Dublin, Indiana - The Dublin Volunteer Fire Department has received a \$114,570 grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security announced this week.

The department, along with five other [Indiana](#) departments, received a total of \$1.2 million from the Assistance to Firefighters Grants Fire Prevention and Safety program.

The grants will enable local fire departments and emergency medical services organizations to purchase or receive training, conduct first responder health and safety programs, and buy equipment and response vehicles.

## A drought of flood insurance

Despite the risk of high waters, many homes have no coverage

**Sherry Slater**The Journal Gazette – August 18, 2008

Despite devastating Midwest floods that caused millions in damage in June, many local homebuyers continue to resist buying coverage.

"People don't buy flood insurance because they think it's too expensive," said John Parker, a State Farm Insurance agent. "They don't think they need it. And they think the government will take care of them."

The numbers show the majority of local homeowners living in areas identified as being at risk of high water don't have flood insurance.

About 4,000 Allen County homes have been built in areas designated as having a 1 percent chance of being flooded every year, but only 1,264 Allen homeowners – or about 30 percent – have flood insurance policies.

It's more than just puzzling. It's disturbing. It's disturbing to me for a number of reasons," said Rod Renkenberger, executive director of the Maumee River Basin Commission.

Renkenberger studies floodplains – those low-lying areas close enough to rivers and streams to be at risk of flooding. His commission identifies risky areas, informs residents about the floodplain designations and looks for ways to mitigate flooding. His ultimate goals are to keep people safe and reduce property losses.

But homeowners also have to help themselves, he said, by checking the floodplain status of any property before they buy it and by insuring the homes and other valuables they have sitting on floodplains.

The government classifies two types of floodplains. Studies estimate some areas can expect to be flooded once every 100 years. Those are the 1 percent floodplains. Other areas are less likely to be flooded but aren't totally out of danger. Those are the 0.2 percent floodplains – or areas at danger of flood about once every 500 years.

The federal government doesn't require flood insurance for homeowners living in 0.2 percent floodplains. But it does require the coverage for every homeowner living in a 1 percent floodplain who gets a mortgage from a financial institution insured by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp.

Renkenberger doubts that 70 percent of the homeowners living in Allen's 1 percent floodplain area own their homes outright and don't make any mortgage payments at all. That percentage just sounds too high when compared with homeownership rates in other areas. Census data back his hunch. According to 2006 numbers, only 29 percent of homes in Allen County didn't have a mortgage.

Renkenberger worries that some lenders aren't telling local homebuyers they are moving into a floodplain and must buy flood insurance. It might seem the lender is assuming the risk of not being paid if the house floods. But if that lender incurs large-scale losses, the FDIC might have to bail it out using taxpayer money.



What's more, the homeowner could lose his accumulated equity in a home destroyed by flood as well as the home's contents without ever knowing the government has identified an area as a flood risk.

The Maumee River Basin Commission has copies of FEMA-issued floodplain maps. Anyone can come to the office and ask to see them. The information is also available online from FEMA.

Renkenberger advises people to arm themselves with information before buying a home by asking long-time residents whether the area has a history of flooding. But most homebuyers don't think to seek the information, he said.

Parker, the State Farm agent, said most of the people who contact him about flood insurance do so only because they're ready to close on a house and have been told it's required. State Farm and Auto-Owners Insurance write many of the flood policies sold in this area.

Although those companies' names are on the insurance, the rules and regulations are set by the federal government rather than individual insurance companies, Parker said. More than 20,000 communities – including Allen County – participate in the National Flood Insurance Program.

"Each community must assess its flood hazard and determine whether flood insurance and floodplain management would benefit the community's residents and economy," according to [www.FloodSmart.gov](http://www.FloodSmart.gov).

Because the local community participates, anyone living here is allowed to buy flood insurance, Renkenberger said. But few do.

As the numbers show, about 70 percent of people who live in identified 1 percent floodplains don't buy flood coverage either.

Donna Shaffer and Ken Johns both have flood insurance. Shaffer has it on her business, and Johns has it on his home. Both are near Junk Ditch.

Shaffer and her husband, Joe, aren't required to keep flood insurance for their contracting company because they own the building. But they've seen it flood so many times since they bought the business in 1977 that they wouldn't skimp on coverage.

"We get water before anyone else does," she said.

The Shaffers pay less than \$500 a year to insure the 5,800-square-foot building. They consider it part of their flood preparedness.

They installed shelves that allow them to store wire and circuit breakers 48 inches above the concrete floors. The building's walls are made of concrete blocks. And the rare piece of carpeting is the indoor/outdoor variety.

Shaffer keeps a toilet brush on hand to scrub down the walls as soon as floodwaters start to recede.

"We decided that the city is not going to help us. We need to help ourselves," she said.

Water has seeped under their doors so many times that the couple has a routine for how to deal with it. But Shaffer knows floodwaters can destroy family photos and other precious belongings.

"If I had a home, I would move out of a floodplain. My heart bleeds for those people" who are unprepared, she said. "I'm just absolutely astonished that more people aren't more prepared." Johns isn't one of those people.

The homeowner has lived in a floodplain – about 1 mile from the St. Marys River – for 27 years. If Johns didn't have to buy flood insurance, he would save the \$226 annual premium.

In the past 10 to 12 years, his home has flooded about seven times.

Johns remembers just one time before that period: 1982. He believes the risk is increasing as officials take more flood control measures upstream.

Even though the flooding risk is obvious, Johns would skip flood insurance if he could because his living area is elevated and he wouldn't suffer extensive damage if his basement and garage flooded.

He could lose his furnace, water heater, washer and dryer.

But considering the high deductible on his coverage, "it just doesn't make sense to carry a big policy and pay for it," Johns said.

Parker, the State Farm agent, estimated his customers pay about \$400 a year for flood policies that cover the structures, improvements and contents of their homes. That's on top of standard homeowners insurance policies that Parker estimated at \$600 a year.

Flood insurance rates differ, based on an area's likelihood of flooding, he said.

Although \$400 is a hefty premium for many homeowners, that same amount of money would seem tiny if a homeowner had to use his \$400 savings to help replace carpet, upholstered furniture and other items destroyed by floodwaters, Parker said.

"It's barely going to get somebody out to clean up the water," he said.

The Insurance Information Institute, a non-profit industry group, cautions homeowners not to count on the federal government to cover the tab for flood damage – even if it designates a disaster area.

Assistance comes in the form of loans, the institute said in a news release. Those no-interest or low-interest loans must be paid back.

"Obtaining a flood insurance policy is the only way to protect you from the cost of flooding," the institute said.

New flood policies carry a 30-day waiting period before coverage kicks in. That rule keeps people from waiting until the nearby creek rises before buying a policy and could explain why local homeowners didn't react to the June flooding in Missouri and southern Indiana by getting insurance.

But the experts say local homeowners are also in denial about the possibility of being caught in a flood.

According to Parker, more of his customers have policies that protect them against earthquakes than cover them in case of floods.

## **By the numbers**

- 5,000 approximate number of homes in 1 percent floodplain and 0.2 percent floodplain
- 350 miles – at a minimum – of Maumee River stream reaches that have no floodplain information at all
- 126 miles of those are in Allen County
- 1,264 flood insurance policies in Allen County
- 4,000 approximate number of homes in 1 percent floodplain – those required to have flood insurance if they have a mortgage from a financial institution insured by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp.



## Relief still flowing to victims

Posted: Aug 18, 2008 08:01 AM EDT

JOHNSON COUNTY, Ind. (The Daily Journal) - Every day, two federal agencies send more money to Johnson County flood victims, and that could continue for months.

Both the U.S. Small Business Administration and Federal Emergency Management Agency are reviewing applications, contacting flood victims and cutting checks to people across the county and central Indiana.

So far, more than \$13 million in grants and loans have been approved for flood victims in Johnson County, making up about 12 percent of the \$108.8 million distributed to flood victims statewide.

Since the Aug. 11 deadline to apply for federal assistance passed, both agencies have continued to work with flood victims, inspecting their homes and discussing their damage.

The SBA expects to stay at its office at the disaster relief center on the Franklin College campus until at least the end of the month, spokeswoman Alana Chavez said.

And, while FEMA left the center last month, agency representatives continue to work with flood victims daily.

"Just because the deadline is over doesn't mean FEMA is gone," spokesman Alberto Pillot said.

More than 2,000 applications for federal aid have come from Johnson County homeowners and businesses looking for money to rent a place to live, to fix their home or business or to buy a new place.

With 179 loans totaling \$7.6 million, Johnson County ranks fourth among the counties that received damage in the June 7 flood for the number of SBA loans and the total dollar amount approved so far.

The same is true for grants approved by FEMA, with Johnson County ranking the same among some of the hardest-hit counties with \$5.6 million approved for housing repairs, rental assistance, medical needs, clothing and cleanup.

The three leading counties are Bartholomew County, with more than \$27 million approved in grants and loans, and Morgan and Vigo counties, both with more than \$19 million approved in grants and loans.

More approvals are being given every day, officials said.

"Those numbers will keep going up," Pillot said.

Both agencies are processing applications that came in from flood victims shortly before the deadline.

A few more have been accepted since, but the victims must give an acceptable reason for missing the deadline, Chavez and Pillot said.

The Small Business Administration also is currently processing loan applications, closing on loans and working with people who were denied and have applied again, Chavez said.

Flood victims could continue to hear from the agency for at least six months.

People have six months after a denial to re-apply for a loan, and officials are encouraging victims to try again if their income or debt changed or if they have another applicant, such as a spouse, who can apply for the loan with them, she said.

Pillot didn't know how long FEMA would continue to give money to flood victims.

Each case takes a different amount of time, depending on flood victims' needs and circumstances, he said.

The work will continue until people's needs are met, he said.

### **FEDERAL FLOOD RELIEF: By the numbers**

U.S. Small Business Administration loans: Here's a look at the loans approved by the U.S. Small Business Administration for flood victims statewide and how Johnson County compares with other counties damaged in the flood:

#### **Indiana**

\$57.2 million: Total approved

1,161: Number of loans

1,062: Loans for homes

95: Loans for businesses

4: Loans for nonprofit organizations

#### **Johnson County**

\$7.6 million: Total approved

179: Number of loans

165: Loans for homes

\$6.8 million: Amount in loans for homes

13: Loans for businesses

\$692,600: Amount in loans for businesses

1: Loan for nonprofit organization for \$37,500

### **Bartholomew County**

\$17 million: Total approved

282: Number of loans

246: Loans for homes

\$14.1 million: Amount in loans for homes

35: Loans for businesses

\$2.2 million: Amount in loans for businesses

1: Loan for nonprofit organization for \$688,200

### **Vigo County**

\$12.3 million: Total approved

254: Number of loans

240: Loans for homes

\$10.1 million: Amount in loans for homes

13: Loans for businesses

\$2 million: Amount in loans for businesses

1: Loan for nonprofit organization for \$292,100

### **Morgan County**

\$10.2 million: Total approved

209: Number of loans

189: Loans for homes

\$8.6 million: Amount in loans for homes

20: Loans for businesses

\$1.7 million: Amount in loans for businesses

### **Marion County**

\$959,700: Total approved

38: Number of loans

34: Loans for homes

\$837,000: Amount in loans for homes

4: Loans for businesses

\$122,700: Amount in loans for businesses

### **Shelby County**

\$1.2 million: Total approved

31: Number of loans

30: Loans for homes

\$1.16 million: Amount in loans for homes

1: Loan for a business for \$36,600

Federal Emergency Management Agency grants: Here's a look at the assistance flood victims have received from the Federal Emergency Management Agency statewide and in Johnson County, compared to other counties with flood damage:

### **Statewide**

17,551: Applications for assistance

11,898: Visits to emergency disaster centers

14,769: Inspections completed

\$43.3 million: Total amount approved for housing assistance

\$6.1 million: Amount approved for rental assistance

\$36.4 million: Amount approved for home repairs

\$628,000: Amount approved for home replacement, for homes destroyed and not covered by flood insurance

\$8.5 million: Amount approved for other needs, including medical expenses, cleanup items and clothing

### **Johnson County**

2,004: Registrations for assistance

1,282: Visits to the disaster relief center at Franklin College

1,715: Inspections completed

\$5.6 million: Total amount approved in grants

\$4.8 million: Amount approved for housing assistance

\$814,000: Amount approved for other needs

### **Bartholomew County**

2,379: Registrations for assistance

2,627: Visits to local disaster relief center

2,088: Inspections completed

\$13.3 million: Total approved in grants

\$11.3 million: Amount approved for housing assistance

\$1.9 million: Amount approved for other needs

### **Vigo County**

3,225: Registrations for assistance

2,780: Visits to local disaster relief center

2,935: Inspections completed

\$9 million: Total amount approved in grants

\$7.5 million: Amount approved for housing assistance

\$1.5 million: Amount approved for other needs

### **Morgan County**

2,608: Registrations for assistance

2,871: Visits to the local disaster relief center

2,178: Inspections completed

\$10.6 million: Total approved in grants

\$8.6 million: Amount approved for housing assistance

\$1.9 million: Amount approved for other needs

### **Marion County**

2,874: Registrations for assistance

895: Visits to the local disaster relief center

2,410: Inspections completed

\$3.5 million: Total approved in grants

\$2.4 million: Amount approved for housing assistance

\$1.1 million: Amount approved for other needs

### **Shelby County**

385: Registrations for assistance

243: Visits to the local disaster relief center

340: Inspections completed

\$1 million: Total approved in grants

\$942,000: Amount approved for housing assistance

\$107,000: Amount approved for other needs

*Report by Annie Goeller, from WISH-TV news gathering partner [The Daily Journal](#).*





## Highway Dept. likely to recoup most flood costs

BY BRIAN ZIMMERMAN • STAFF WRITER • AUGUST 16, 2008

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The Wayne County Highway Department expects to recoup a majority of the estimated \$200,000 tab it accrued fixing area roads following flooding June 4, supervisor Mike Parks said Friday.

That's because the Federal Emergency Management Agency has declared Wayne County, along with 42 other [Indiana](#) counties, eligible for public assistance, following natural disasters across the state in May and June.

"To be able to recoup some of that money will really help us as we move on," Parks said about repairs that took place in northwestern Wayne County.

The majority of the work involved removing debris along roadways and rebuilding roads and utilities, he said.

Flood-related repairs have been ongoing since June 4, Parks said, but all repairs should be finished by Monday. County highway officials will meet with FEMA officials Wednesday, he said.

Fred Griffin, director of Wayne County Emergency Management, said the declaration would restore funding to local governments who are already hard hit by budget cuts.

"It helps everybody stay on track, keep our budgets intact, at least to the extent that they can, and keep those tax dollars available for needed local projects and things that we already had planned before the storm hit," Griffin said.

The towns of Hagerstown and Greens Fork, the city of Richmond and Whitewater Valley REMC are also expected to meet with FEMA to file claims, Griffin said.

Griffin said about 40 Wayne County homeowners have filed for individual assistance, which was made available by FEMA immediately following the flooding in early June, Griffin said. He said it was unclear Friday how many received assistance.



## June floods: Looking back at 'The Perfect Storm'

**August 16, 2008**

Weather system described as 'amazing to watch on radar'; Parts of Vigo County got 12-16 inches in 24 hours

**By Arthur E. Foulkes**

The Tribune-Star

TERRE HAUTE — Memories of floods more than 20 years ago in Calumet City, Ill., caused Dr. Dorene Hojnicky, director of the Vigo County Emergency Management Agency, to look at the sky with concern the night of June 6.

Rain had been coming down steadily since around 6 p.m. and Hojnicky, around 10 p.m., decided to contact her two deputies, J.D. Kesler and Keith Holbert, and put them on alert.

"I started thinking this could be a bad night," Hojnicky said, remembering that Friday night. Around the same time she called Kesler and Holbert, Hojnicky started getting calls from the Vigo County Highway Department telling her some roads were flooded and being closed. "I kept thinking, when is this [rain] going to stop?" she said.

The first call for sandbags during the flood came late Friday night from a location on Oregon Church Road in southern Vigo County, Hojnicky said.

That was unusual. Calls for sandbags normally come from other areas of the county, such as Toad Hop or other places near the Wabash River, she said. She picked up the phone and called Kesler, the deputy director of planning for the EMA, instructing him to start delivering sandbags. Other calls for sandbags reached Hojnicky, and around 3 a.m., she called Holbert, the deputy director of operations, asking him to join Kesler.

### The Perfect Storm

The weather system that carried the June 6-7 storm is "amazing to watch on radar," said Greg Bierly, director of the climatology lab at Indiana State University. "It just parks" over the area, he said.

The week before the flood, Vigo County and west-central Indiana already had experienced a lot of rainfall, said Al Shipe, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Indianapolis. According to data provided by WSI Corp., southern Vigo County received more than 16 inches of rain from May 31 until 8 a.m. on June 7.

"That's just a recipe for disaster," Shipe said. "You don't see that type of set up very often. It's just like the movie 'Perfect Storm.' You've got to have everything in order."

It was the rainfall in the week before the flood that really set the stage for the June 6-7 flash flooding, Shipe said.

### State of Emergency

Because of flooded roads near his home in West Terre Haute, it took Holbert an hour to reach Kesler in southern Vigo County. Once together, Kesler and Holbert kept in two-way radio contact with EMA director Hojnicky in the driving rain as they delivered sandbags.

"You couldn't see anything," Holbert said. In some areas roads were so flooded it was hard to tell where they were, he

said. Even U.S. 41 was covered with several inches of water. "It was an experience I don't want to soon revisit," he said.

Around 5 a.m., Holbert and Kesler called Hojnicky to report they were having trouble getting to the places where they were needed due to flooded roads. Hojnicky radioed for them to report to her southern Vigo County home, where she was monitoring emergency radio traffic, receiving phone calls and watching the radar. The three would have a cup of coffee and regroup, she said.

When Holbert and Kesler arrived at Hojnicky's home, they reported that the road into her subdivision was covered by several inches of water. "They said forget the coffee, you're leaving the house and coming with us," she said. It was time to open an Emergency Operations Center at the EMA office on South Fourth Street in Terre Haute.

Around this time, Hojnicky received a call from David Decker, the president of the Vigo County Commissioners. "I was just about to call you," she said. It was time to declare a state of emergency in Vigo County.

### **Getting out the Message**

It was dark and still raining hard as Angie Doan traveled to work at the Vigo County 911 dispatch office around 5:30 a.m. Saturday, June 7. Doan lives in Terre Haute, so she didn't know how bad things were becoming outside the city limits in parts of Vigo County.

The 911 emergency lines "just exploded" early that morning, Doan said. The calls were coming in so fast that dispatchers were having trouble answering them all. Some calls rolled over to ISU's public safety department, she said. Despite more than eight years of experience as a 911 dispatcher, this was a first for Doan and her colleagues. "You couldn't answer [the calls] fast enough. I have never experienced anything like that."

People were dialing 911 to report water entering their homes, Doan said. One motorist in West Terre Haute reported his car was filling with water. She advised him to back out, but he couldn't because the car had stalled. Eventually he scrambled to safety, but his vehicle literally floated away, she said.

"I've never seen our lines lit up that much for that long," Doan said. Many callers were frightened, she said. Doan worked overtime that day, as did other dispatchers. Calls missed the first time were returned as soon as possible, she said. By chance, a very experienced crew was working the 911 office that morning. "We were lucky," she said.

When Hojnicky called central dispatch to tell them of the state of emergency, all the dispatchers were extremely busy; however, one dispatcher, Jeanene Elder, made time to work out the wording of the emergency notification message that would soon be delivered to around 100,000 Vigo County homes over the county's automated telephone messaging system. She wrote out her script and recorded the emergency message.

"With the phones ringing so much in the background, [writing the message] was kind of hard," Elder said. Still, after just one fumbled take, Elder made the recording and the system, which can call up to 60,000 telephone numbers per hour, was activated. Elder went back to answering 911 calls. It would be nearly eight hours before any dispatcher could even get up to leave the room, Doan said.

### **Swift Water Rescue**

The EMA dispatched the first rescue boat Saturday morning before sunrise to the village of Toad Hop in West Terre Haute, Holbert said. Later that morning crews performed rescues in other areas of the county, including lower Allendale, where rooftop rescues were necessary.

"That water was moving," Hojnicky said. Water rescues are difficult enough, but these were being performed in moving water in the driving rain and in the dark, she said. "It's a very difficult thing," Hojnicky said. When floodwater covers roads, rescuers lose their landmarks, she noted.

Because of high water, some key emergency responders had trouble getting to the Emergency Operations Center at the EMA office, Hojnicky said. Honey Creek Fire Department Chief Tom High was taking information and giving instructions from his home; Jeff Fox, chief of the Riley Fire Department, was trying to keep his fire station from flooding and was calling on the Indiana Fire Chiefs Association for back up; and Chief James Holbert of Sugar Creek Fire and Rescue had his hands full with water rescue operations that started before sunrise, Hojnicky said.

### **How much rain?**

Around 8 a.m. June 7, Ian Comstock, a senior geography and climate student at ISU, was getting soaked as he took the rain water measurement at the university's weather observation station. Most mornings the measurements are taken quickly. On this morning, because of the volume of water in the rain gauge, the operation required about three times more work than normal, he said.

The 4.59 inches of rain measured by Comstock was the most recorded in a 24-hour period at the university since 1973,

ISU climate lab data shows. Added to the rain that fell during the following 24-hours, the ISU station measured 5 inches of rain June 6-8.

Rainfall readings were even higher in other parts of Vigo County. According to WSI Corp., 12-16 inches of rain fell in southeastern Vigo County in the 24-hours before 8 a.m. June 7. The rest of southern Vigo County received between 8 and 12 inches, WSI data shows.

According to National Weather Service data, Terre Haute's June 6-7 rainfall measured 6.83 inches. A typical month in the Midwest sees between 21½ and 41½ inches of rain, Bierly noted.

"I knew things were going to be bad for Vigo County," the National Weather Service's Shipe said. But some areas of the state experienced even more rain, he noted. On June 6-7, a weather station near Brazil recorded 7.5 inches of rain, according to National Weather Service data. Farther east, 8.8 inches were measured in Martinsville in Morgan County and nearly 10 inches were recorded in Spencer in Owen County, according to the National Weather Service.

## 24/7

By later Saturday, the Vigo County Emergency Operation Center was the central command center for all emergency operations in the county. That first day, information and questions were coming into the emergency command center so quickly "it was like trying to drink from a fire hose," Hojnicky said.

Soon, representatives of law enforcement, fire, health, the Red Cross and others all were working out of the EOC. Hojnicky's first priority was to evacuate nursing homes and find other hospitals and nursing homes that could take evacuees, she said. Soon, emergency responders also realized wells were being flooded, so emergency supplies of drinking water would be needed. Hojnicky put in a call with the state EOC for enough water for 25,000 people for three days. Water was supplied by Wal-Mart, Pepsi, Miller Brewing and Anheuser-Busch, she said.

Meanwhile, water rescues continued in the county until shortly before sunset Saturday night.

As the week continued, emergency responders in the EOC worked 16- to 18-hour shifts, Hojnicky said, adding that she and other emergency responders barely ate while on duty. The EOC operated 24-hours per day for an entire week after the flood. Hojnicky didn't get her first normal night's sleep until the following Saturday, she said.

Many emergency responders worked just as much outside the center. One bit of luck was that it was a National Guard weekend, so National Guardsmen were in town who normally wouldn't have been, she said. Among other things, the Guard teamed up with the Indiana State Police to prevent looting in the flood's aftermath, Hojnicky said.

In addition, several church and other volunteer groups, such as the Red Cross, Operation Blessings, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the Lutheran Church and the Southern Baptist Kitchen, all provided vital services, Hojnicky said.

"The response community did a phenomenal job," Hojnicky said. Since the 9-11 attacks in 2001, emergency responders had been working together across disciplines and across county lines, she noted. Most of the area's emergency responders now know each other and have worked together in the past in mock emergency exercises, she said. "That training paid off," Hojnicky said.

It is still not clear how many Vigo County residents had their homes lost or damaged by the flooding; however, more than 3,000 households eventually applied to the Federal Emergency Management Agency for help. There were no reported fatalities.

"I still worry," Hojnicky said when asked when she stopped worrying about the weather. Still, thanks to the June flood, the EMA and other area emergency response teams in the area are better prepared for the next emergency, she said. "We learned a lot. There were some questions we couldn't answer for people. There were some stutter-steps, but I don't think we did too bad."



## FEMA homes set up for Vigo flood victims

**By Brian M. Boyce**  
The Tribune-Star

TERRE HAUTE — It probably isn't just like home, but for 10 Vigo County families rendered homeless by June flooding, manufactured housing provided by FEMA is a safe and dry option for the time being.

"They're not going to have grandmother's picture up on the wall," commented Federal Emergency Management Agency spokesman Mel Jenkins, noting that the devastation of losing one's belongings in a flood is so severe that sometimes just getting one's feet back on the ground is the most immediate goal.

Jenkins and others toured one of the new manufactured homes set up at 3848 S. Wellington Place in the Pine Forest Park on Friday afternoon near the Federal Correctional Complex.

Of the 10 slated for Vigo County, two families already have been selected to fill them, he said.

"There's a good rental stock in Terre Haute," Jenkins said, noting that the agency's goal is to use private sector housing to its max before bringing in new facilities.

But for those chosen on a "case-by-case" basis, the manufactured homes come move-in ready, complete with furniture and personal kits with silverware, brooms, pillow sheets and glassware.

"Many of these people lost everything they had," Jenkins said, noting that people who had \$500,000 homes destroyed received roughly the same amount of aid as those with lower-income housing.

And these homes are not meant to be long term, he said.

"The normal length of time is 18 months," he said, noting that within that period of time the families' homes should either be repaired or replaced.

The homes brought in by FEMA came straight off the lot, according to Jenkins, and have been checked and inspected and approved for this usage.

Once finished here, "they can be taken back to the depots and refurbished and made ready for the second round."

John Erickson, a spokesman for the Indiana Department of Homeland Security, noted that the process of getting flood victims back onto dry ground has been multi-agency.

"We're partnering with FEMA on the response," he said, adding that Hoosiers are needing help, and they're there to give it.